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Community Control, Workers' Control, and the Cooperative Commonwealth**

The principles of the Left Green Network¹ refer to the democratic, socially owned, cooperative, and ecological economy we envision as a 'Cooperative Commonwealth'. It goes without saying that Left Greens believe that the people should control the day-to-day operations of their workplaces. But what about the broader social decisions concerning the economy—the structure of demand; the coordination of distribution networks; the disposition of surplus between investment, public goods, and private consumption; the choice of technology; the scale of production units and distribution networks; the harmonization of the economy with the environment? Should these be decisions made by workers or by all citizens? In short, in our vision of a cooperative commonwealth, what should be the relation between workers' control and community control?

Two leftist models that claim to be democratic, socially owned, cooperative, and ecological can be dismissed in short order. One, market socialism, based on producer and consumer cooperatives, reproduces the evils of markets: the predatory ethics of competition and

1. The Left Green Network was formed by North American Greens and other independent leftists to advance an anti-capitalist, anti-statist program and revolutionary strategy within the Green movement and the broader independent left.

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greed; the dearth of public goods; the surfeit of ecological and social 'externalities'; the expansive market logic of limitless growth that is devouring the biosphere. The other, democratic socialism, based on central planning by elected state agencies, entrenches a new class of technocrats in privileged positions and does not overcome the irrationalities that command planning creates, whether the planning class is elected or self-appointed.

This is not to preclude cooperatives or the democratization of public enterprise and planning (e.g., direct election of the board of a public electric utility that is currently appointed) from playing a role as transitional forms and demands. But I want to focus here on the leftist traditions whose maximum program is an economy coordinated from below without the market or the state.

The libertarian left has offered two basic models for this kind of postrevolutionary economy: the worker-oriented models of anarcho-syndicalism,² council communism,³ guild socialism,⁴ negotiated coordination,⁵ and participatory planning,⁶ and the community-oriented models of anarcho-communism.⁷

2. Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1989; orig. 1938).

3. Anton Panajotovic, "Workers' Councils," in Root and Branch, eds., *Root and Branch: The Rise of the Workers' Movements* (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1975; orig. 1942). The most extensive attempt to work out the economics of council communism is in Cornelius Castoriadis, *Workers' Councils and the Economics of a Self-Managed Society* (Philadelphia: Wooden Shoe, 1984; orig. 1958).

4. G.D.H. Cole, *Guild Socialism Restated* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1980; orig. 1920).

5. "Negotiated coordination" is the term used by Pat Devine, *Democracy and Economic Planning: The Political Economy of a Self-governing Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), one of the most detailed attempts to work out a non-market, non-statist socialist economic model.

6. "Participatory planning" is the term used by Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel in their detailed model of a non-market, non-statist socialist economy. See Albert and Hahnel, *Socialism Today and Tomorrow* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); "Participatory Planning," in Steve Shalom, ed., *Socialist Visions* (Boston: South End Press, 1983); *Looking Forward*:

Anarcho-syndicalism and council communism propose to organize the economy around workplace assemblies that are coordinated through mandated and recallable delegates to workers' councils which are federated by industries and by geographical areas. The geographical workers' federations would determine demand in their areas and coordinate supply, while the industry federations would determine how to produce to supply the demand. The area and industry federations would negotiate on a plan to balance supply and demand.

Guild socialism, negotiated coordination, and participatory planning build on this model, adding consumer councils to determine demand. The industry federations determine how to produce what is needed, and the area federations coordinate the distribution. In this case, negotiation between the federations of workers' councils and consumers' councils would determine the plan.⁸

Participatory Economics for the Twenty First Century (Boston: South End Press, 1991); and *The Political Economy of Participatory Economics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

7. Peter Kropotkin is the classic anarcho-communist. Two representative statements are his *The Conquest of Bread* (London: Elephant, 1985; orig. 1892) and *Act for Yourself* (London: Freedom Press, 1988; orig. 1886-1907). A good historical overview is provided by Alain Pengam, "Anarcho-communism," in Maximilien Rubel and John Crump, eds., *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Macmillan Press, 1987). Murray Bookchin stated the contemporary case for anarcho-communism in his *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1986; orig. 1970). Other important statements for the ultimate accountability of workers' control to community control are Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958; orig. 1949) and Gar Alperovitz, "Notes Toward a Pluralist Commonwealth," in Gar Alperovitz and Staughton Lynd, *Strategy and Program: Two Essays Toward a New American Socialism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973). Two other statements along these lines that also have an ecological orientation are Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1934), Chapter 8; and Paul and Percival Goodman, *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960; orig. 1948), Chapter 6.
8. Cole, Devine, and Albert and Hahnel do give the community through its political institutions the final say on economic planning when there are disputes among the workers' and consumers' federations. In each case, these

Anarcho-communism proposes to organize the economy around federations of community assemblies as the policy-making bodies, initially with federations of workplace assemblies, by area and by industry, as administrative bodies. In this case, workers' control is accountable to a larger framework of community control in determining the plan of coordination.

In the longer run, anarcho-communism seeks to progressively dissolve into the community the separate enterprises based on a social and geographical division of labor. By physically decentralizing production to create rounded communities that reintegrate production and consumption, agriculture and manufacture, natural beauty and urban amenities, mental and manual labor, means of livelihood and ways of life, the question of workers' control as distinct from community control is eventually rendered moot.

In the nineteenth century, however, with the rising factory system, the question of workers' control was anything but moot for anarchists. Anarchists thought they agreed on a vision of society as a dual federation: economic, a federation of self-managing workers' associations; and territorial, a federation of free communes (i.e., municipalities). But how workers' control should relate to community control was never clearly posed until the 1880s, when it led to a split rather than a resolution.

In 1880, Swiss anarchists in the Jura Federation, unable to make up their minds, simply left the question open in one of their documents: "Is it to be a general assembly of all inhabitants, or delegations from the trades ... which will draw up the constitution of the commune?"⁹

political institutions are participatory, based on assembly forms and mandated and recallable representation. Cole calls these institutions communal as opposed to statist; Albert and Hahnel sometimes do and sometimes do not make it clear that these forms are distinct from statist forms, while Devine simply regards them as more democratic forms of the state. But what still distinguishes these models from community-oriented models is that the economy is still institutionalized as a separate set of institutions. The community, through its political institutions, is merely a court of last resort for economic disputes.

9. Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), pp. 58-59.

By the end of the decade, however, the two possible answers to that question had split the anarchists into rival tendencies: the syndicalists who looked to the workers to expropriate the capitalists and reorganize economy under trade union control and the communists who looked to the risen people to expropriate the capitalists and reorganize the economy under municipal control. The class-conscious syndicalists ridiculed the communists for seeking popular alliances with the middle and lumpen classes, while the anti-reformist communists ridiculed the syndicalists for their trade union struggles for ameliorative reforms within capitalism like better wages and the eight-hour day.

Another crucial difference from our viewpoint as social ecologists was that the anarcho-syndicalists were generally enamored of industrial technology and wanted to adapt anarchist principles to it, while the anarcho-communists wanted to adapt machine technology to integrated communities that combined industry and agriculture and dissolved the social division of labor.¹⁰ Although anarcho-syndicalism became the dominant tendency by the turn of the twentieth century, the anarcho-communists' territorial orientation naturally dovetailed with ecological concerns for the immediate land and environment of free communes (i.e., municipalities). The anarcho-communists' interest in adapting technology to decentralized communities led to a revival of anarcho-communism in the 1960s as the New Left turned its attention to issues of participatory democracy, urbanism, bureaucracy, community, technology, and ecology. Sixties activists read Paul Goodman's writings on these subjects and rediscovered Kropotkin's thinking on them. Murray Bookchin found a growing audience for his explicitly ecologically grounded anarcho-communism. These perspectives then found their way into the left-wing of the anti-nuclear alliances of the 1970s and the Green movement that emerged in the 1980s.

Yet the question of workers' control remains a vexing one for eco-anarchists. Between the economic structure we inherit today and the eco-communities and bioregions of tomorrow lies a process of movement building and then fundamental change in power relations.

10. Peter Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974; orig. 1888-1890); Alexander Berkman, *What Is Communist Anarchism?* (New York: Dover, 1972; orig. 1929), pp. 283-88.

In the meantime, many of us will spend eight hours a day at a workplace year after year. The day after a revolution, we will still have the centralized structure of physical production and distribution to coordinate even as we begin to decentralize it. So the answer, it seems to me, lies in not choosing between the workers' control and community control, but in finding the proper relationship between the two for today and for how the relationship should evolve as the physical production structure is remade to correspond to a libertarian community structure.

I will argue that the anarcho-communist tradition—and particularly the libertarian municipalist approach advanced by Murray Bookchin¹¹—offers the best framework for integrating workers' control and community control in a process of social change that ultimately yields a marketless, moneyless, stateless cooperative commonwealth. My basic position is:

The building blocks, power base, and policy-making bodies of a democratic political economy should be local community assemblies, inclusive of all people, that coordinate with each other through confederal administrative councils of mandated, recallable, and rotating delegates. While self-management of the day-to-day operations by the workers of each workplace should be affirmed, the basic economic policies concerning needs, distribution, allocation of surplus, technology, scale, and ecology should be determined by all citizens. In short, workers' control should be placed within the broader context of, and ultimately accountable to, community control.

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11. Murray Bookchin's writings on libertarian municipalism include "The Forms of Freedom" in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*; "The American Crisis," *Comment*, Vol. 1, Nos. 4,5 (February, August 1980); "Anarchism: Past and Present," *Comment*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (May 1980); "The Concept of Libertarian Municipalism," *Comment*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (November 1980); "Municipalization: Community Ownership of the Economy," *Green Perspectives*, Vol. 2 (February 1986); "Theses on Libertarian Municipalism" in *The Limits of the City* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1986); "The New Municipal Agenda" in *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1987); "Radical Politics in an Era of Advanced Capitalism," *Green Perspectives*, Vol. 18 (November 1989); "The Meaning of Confederation," *Green Perspectives*, Vol. 20 (November 1990); "Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview" (Burlington: Social Ecology Project, April 1991).

Over time, the community should reorganize work so that people are not tied to any particular workplace, but rotate among a variety of workplaces and types of work (mental/manual, conceptual/rote, agriculture/manufacture, etc.). At the same time, the physical structure of the economy should be progressively decentralized until production and consumption, workers and community, are largely reunited in eco-communities and bioregions, and the question of workers' control is rendered moot.

In the meantime, the final word on all social policy, including economic policy, should rest with all the people in their community assemblies. Fighting to create and empower these assemblies, to bring more and more political and economic power under their control, in opposition to the state and capital, is the best means we have for creating this sort of cooperative commonwealth. Workplace organizing should be an organic extension of the community-based movement.

The reasons for this position will become clear by discussing the arguments between the worker-oriented and community-oriented theories. These arguments bear not only on what the economy should ultimately look like, but also on how we organize and struggle to get there. The arguments have revolved around four basic questions:

1. Democracy—What institutional framework best enables people to take direct control of society, uproot all forms of hierarchy, and discover their common interests?
2. The Revolutionary Subject—What social sectors are likely to become radicalized and take militant action?
3. Power—What social sectors and forms of organization and action have the potential power to overthrow capital and the state?
4. Transitional Strategy—What forms of organization and action best prefigure and build toward the new society?

Democracy

A fundamental problem with the worker-oriented positions from the viewpoint of democracy is that not everyone is a worker. Many are too young or old, sick, disabled, unemployed, rearing children, working for

themselves outside the formal economy, and so forth. At any one time, those with 'official' jobs are only around 40 percent of the population and 60 percent of adults.

Anarcho-syndicalism and council communism thus exclude or underrepresent in economic decision making many social groupings affected by those decisions, such as women, minorities, and the elderly who are not involved in production because they are rearing children and housekeeping, discriminated against, or retired. This is true for both the revolutionary unions or workers' councils before the revolution and the worker-planned economy after the revolution.

Guild socialism, negotiated coordination, and participatory planning give every citizen a voice through the consumer federations. But the problem here is that by granting equal power in the planning negotiations between the federations of workers' councils and consumers' councils, workers basically get two votes in the planning process, one on the production side and one on the consumption side. Nonworkers only get one vote on the consumption side. This privileges workers in the decision-making process.

A community assembly, on the other hand, is open to all citizens. It is thus potentially a nonhierarchical public sphere where all interests and concerns get a hearing and everyone has an equal standing—one person, one vote.

The workplace, by contrast, is not a rounded public sphere. It is one-sided, concerned with production. There is a built-in contradiction in the workerist models between the workers' functional interests in their workplaces as against the interests of the community as a whole. In the planning process, the workers either decide everything (anarcho-syndicalism, council communism) or get an additional vote in the planning process (guild socialism, negotiated coordination, participatory planning). Either way, the workers hold a veto over society. Either way—even without the profit motive to fuel competition—each workers' assembly, council, and federation has an interest in easing its own burdens and shifting them on to other functional groups or on to society and nature as 'externalities'. Why should the workers of a workplace or a whole industry produce more to meet demand? Why should they shut down 'their' plant for environmental or productivity reasons and relocate to another modernized plant or another branch of production?

Why should they take affirmative action to diversify their workforce racially and sexually?

No internal dynamic exists in the workerist models to reconcile the particular interests of workplaces and industries with the general interest of the broader community. To the contrary, the inherent structural tendency—despite, let me reemphasize, the absence of a competitive struggle for profits—is for self-aggrandizement by each functional group. In the historical example of the Spanish revolution of 1936–37, the dual federation structure of the anarcho-syndicalists came into conflict with itself, with the industrial federations finally asserting themselves over the area federations. In the workerist models, each functional group has a particular interest—as against other functional groups as well as the community as a whole.

In order to overcome the divisions which pose one group against another along the lines of race, gender, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, and so forth, we need a basic social unit which is inclusive of all people. The territorially defined local community, institutionalized as a directly democratic community assembly, meets this need.

In the community assembly, different social groups (genders, ethnic groups, ages, classes) and functional groups (occupations, both formal jobs and informal work) must coexist. Direct communication is possible. Conflicting interests can be dealt with directly by the people who have to live the decisions.

Community assemblies do not automatically transcend race, class, gender, and other divisions (a problem I will return to below with respect to how a municipalist approach can deal with the historically intransigent racism of the U.S.). But all interests are brought together on an equal footing in a deliberative democratic process that can lead to the discovery of common interests. Sectional interests, be they workers, women, or ethnic minorities, can still caucus and organize to press their concerns. They can still take direct action to force a community that is failing to deal with their concerns to do so.

The difference between workplace and community assemblies is that the internal dynamic of direct democracy in communities gives a hearing to solutions that bring out the common ground and, when there is not consensus, an equal vote to every member of the community.

Democracy is no guarantee that common ground will be adopted, but it is a necessary condition. The only guarantee is that when one section of society has institutionalized privileges, it will use those privileges to advance their particular interest at the expense of the general interest.

Given the present-day uneven geographical distribution of industry, classes, and ethnic groups, not all local communities will bring all the social interests and functions together. But at the municipal level of confederated community assemblies, and still more at the regional level of confederated municipalities, these interests and conflicts will be incorporated into the deliberations of the confederal grassroots democracy. Indeed, the sharing of resources and productive facilities among communities regionally and among confederated regions will serve to solidarize communities on the basis of common material needs as well as ideological commitments.

Building on the foundation of a socially decentralized coordination of the economy, an additional policy of progressive physical decentralization of the industrial structure to create more self-sufficing (but not autarkic) communities would reinforce and enhance democracy. The historic breach between anonymous producers and consumers that was created by the expansion of capitalism into a global market nexus could be progressively dissolved. To the extent that production and consumption were reunited on a human scale, society would be rendered more comprehensible and social self-management more feasible. Economic 'externalities' would be 'internalized' as a natural and normal community concern. The community oriented toward its ecological bioregion, not the workplace oriented toward international divisions of labor and networks of exchange, is the framework around which we can construct relatively self-sufficing, rounded communities.

With the rotation of community members among a variety of workplaces, neither factory, farm, shop, or office would function as separate interests in the community. The temporary functional divisions of labor as people rotate among tasks would not correspond to a permanent social division of labor and the permanent sectional interests we have today that divide humanity against itself. Workplaces would essentially become administrative agencies implementing policy made by the whole community. People with special expertise in branches of production would be elected to advisory boards to propose policies that the

community could adopt, amend, or reject. The economy would become truly politicized as one aspect of the public affairs addressed by the community assemblies and their confederal councils.

Work rotation could also be organized by the area federations in the workerist models, but this would still institutionalize the workers as a distinct class with a unique and privileged relation to the means of production and particular interest in the decision-making structure. If a classless society is the goal, then people who work should not have any privileges over those who do not work. In the case of work rotation policies and schedules, it is more democratic for the community as a whole to determine work assignments because they not only affect those who do the work, but also their friends, families, and neighbors.

The community provides us with a framework for integrating these concerns and ultimately dissolving enterprises into a community's ecology and way of life. Separate enterprises, after all, are an essential condition of capitalism, the cells of the capitalist mode of production, the form which property takes under capitalism. Where control over the means of production is divided among enterprises, the links between them can only be commercial contracts to buy each others' output. Models of economic democracy based on workers' control of the workplace only reinforce this condition of capitalism.¹²

In sum, the most democratic structure for a cooperative commonwealth would be (1) workers' control of the everyday operations of workplaces with workers rotating among workplaces (until physical

12. It is precisely because the guild socialism of Cole and the democratic planning models of Devine and Albert and Hahnel do not envision the eventual dissolution of the enterprise with its separate workplaces into the life of communities that they retain a form of money and exchange-value based on labor time in order to link workplaces by exchange that is national and international in scale. As long as ownership remains social, workplaces remain internally democratic, and prices remain socially planned by a democratic process of negotiation, exploitation, imbalances, and private accumulation are theoretically precluded. Yet as long as workplaces confront each other and consumption units as functionally differentiated interests, there is the real possibility that these units will seek advantage over each other, reintroducing competition, and leading eventually to regression back to capitalism with competitive markets and private accumulation.

decentralization largely reunites production and consumption, workers and community, in eco-communities and bioregions that render workers' control as distinct from community control no longer a question), and (2) community control of the basic economic decisions concerning the structure of consumption, the allocation of production responsibilities, the disposition of surplus, the choice of technology, the scale of production and distribution, and harmonization with the environment.

The Revolutionary Subject

Workerist positions developed more from a belief that the working class was the revolutionary class than from abstract speculation about the structure of an ideal society in the future. Until the revolutions of 1848, radicals cast their views in populist terms—a broad coalition of 'The People' vs. the small elites with ill-begotten privileges. Marx and Engels, of course, changed that view by providing the emerging workers' movement with a theory about their role as the class that would rise to power and, in so doing, abolish all classes. Class struggle, not popular struggle, became the watchword of radicals. As Marx and Engels declared in their 1848 *Communist Manifesto*, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle."¹³

The Marxist theory of the working class as the revolutionary subject (a view which anarcho-syndicalism and council communism share) can be summed up in four key propositions:

1. The basic dynamic in capitalist society is the class struggle between the working class and the capitalist class. *The Communist Manifesto*:

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses this distinctive feature: It has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other—bourgeoisie and proletariat.¹⁴

13. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968; orig. 1848), p. 2.

14. *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 20.

2. The working class is an 'immense majority'. *The Communist Manifesto*:

All previous historical movements were movements of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interests of the immense majority.¹⁵

3. Because of its exploited and dehumanized position in relation to the means of production, the working class is compelled to become a revolutionary class. Marx and Engels:

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class.¹⁶

When socialist writers ascribe this world-historic role to the proletariat, it is not at all ... because they regard the proletarians as gods. Rather the contrary.... It cannot emancipate itself without abolishing all the inhuman conditions of life of society today which are summed up in its own situation. Not in vain does it go through the stern school of labor. It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment regards as its aim. It is a question of what the proletariat is, and what, in accordance with this being, it will historically be compelled to do.¹⁷

4. The industrial proletariat is the core of the revolutionary working class because the factory system is training it in science, technology, cooperation, and unity. First Engels, then Marx:

Finally, it may be observed that it is the factory workers ... who form the solid core of the working-class movement.... As one branch of handicraft industry after another is transformed by the factory system, so more and more workers flock into the various working-class movements.¹⁸

15. *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 22.

16. *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 3.

17. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Holy Family* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975; orig. 1844), p. 47.

Hand in hand with this centralization, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever-extending scale, the cooperative form of the labor-process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labor into instruments of labor usable only in common, the economizing of all means of production by their use as the means of production of combined, socialized labor, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market, and with this, the international character of the capitalistic regime. Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital ... grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working-class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself.¹⁹

History has not developed the way Marx and the syndicalists thought it would.

First of all, capitalism has not simplified the social question into a two-class struggle. Second, the industrial working class is not the immense majority, but a minority and decreasing in social weight. On the one side is the growing 'underclass' of the permanently unemployed, surviving off the dole and often petty criminal pursuits, as well as the growing 'servant class' of highly casualized workers in personal services and subcontractor sweatshops. On the other side is a smaller but growing, highly educated, securely employed, and well-paid strata of technical and professional but still waged workers. All may be exploited in Marxian terms, but they view each other as quite different status groups, not class comrades.

Moreover, as capitalist development has proceeded, stratification has congealed around a wide array of nonclass identities, creating a myriad of racial, sexual, occupational, educational, bureaucratic, re-

18. Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968; orig. 1845), p. 273.

19. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume I (New York: International Publishers, 1967; orig. 1867), p. 763.

gional, and international hierarchies. To theoretically impose from the outside of this reality an objective class commonality based on a relation to productive forces does not mean subjective class consciousness will automatically follow. To the contrary, for the last 40 years, it has been the transclass issues that have mobilized people—the so-called 'new social movements' around peace, the environment, feminism, gay liberation, racial equality, ethnic autonomy, community control, and a whole array of cultural movements that reject the alienated structure of needs and the compensatory consumption that have grown with the commodification of social relations. Popular struggles against spiritual impoverishment, much more than class struggle around material exploitation, have been the radical movements since the New Left mobilized initially around civil rights, anti-colonialism, anti-bureaucratism, and banning the bomb in the 1950s. The 'immense majority' today are the many alienated and oppressed sectors of society, not a single class defined by its relationship to the means of production. Economistic 'class struggle' is too one-sided and parochial to express the universalization of the struggle against multiple forms of hierarchy and irrationality. The democratic struggles of 'The People' better express this generalization of the struggle against myriad forms of domination than the two-class struggle of wage labor and capital. The community is the potential public sphere where this broad array of oppositional forces can generalize their particular struggles around a common program of radical democratization. Struggles at the point of production are limited to that sphere and are easily isolated there. Even a general strike can pit workers not only against capitalists, but against many segments of the popular strata that are inconvenienced by the strike and perceive it as the action of a 'special interest', not on behalf of the general interest.

Third, the class struggle no doubt continues under capitalism. But it has become a struggle over how to best manage it and distribute its product, not over its right to exist. To continue to impute unique revolutionary dynamics to it after witnessing the last 75 years is to be blind to the evolution of revolutionary syndicalism into collective bargaining and revolutionary socialism into ameliorative social democracy—in short, into the day-to-day administration of capitalism.

Fourth, far from being a school for revolutionary socialism, the factory has been a school for docility. If one examines the history of

workers' uprisings, one usually finds a 'working class' that was new to the factory system, in transition from the farm or artisanship. Whether one examines the European uprisings of 1848, the Paris Commune of 1871, the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the workers' council movements throughout Europe after World War I, the Spanish Revolution of 1936-37, or Polish Solidarity in the 1980s, one finds that the activists came from a much wider array of life situations than industrial workers and that the industrial workers were generally in recent transition to those occupations. Moreover, the children of the radical industrial workers were socialized into and tended to adapt to the factory system with its military-like chain of command and obedience. The hereditary working class came to regard the hierarchical discipline of the factory more as the inevitable nature of things, not a burden to be resisted; it is a hierarchy of occupational grades more as a career and status ladder to climb than a prop to knock out from under the bosses. The factory 'disciplined, organized, united' workers into capitalism, not into opposition to it.

Marx hoped that workers struggling for their own interests would raise a general interest that would ultimately dissolve class and national divisions into a classless society. Looking back today, it is fair to conclude that when workers have struggled around their own economic interests, they have usually sought merely a better deal from capitalism, not a classless society.

In any case, the industrial structure that Marx saw emerging and analyzed with often remarkable prescience is passing. With automation, the fate of the industrial worker is that of the farmer. Factories, like farms, will remain, but automated machinery and robots will replace most of the human labor. Indeed, we are in the midst of a technological revolution based on microelectronics and biotechnology that will be as profound in its social implications as the agricultural and industrial revolutions. It will be 'postindustrial' in terms of what most ordinary people do for a living, but super-industrialized in terms of the degree of mechanized production.

Along with this technological revolution is a restructuring of the social paths through which wealth and income circulate. In fact, just as the factory system was introduced by capitalists to mobilize and discipline labor before most of the technology of smokestack industries was

developed, so, too, capitalist restructuring today is driving the technological revolution. Heightened international competition is undermining the 'social contract' between labor and capital that yielded the 'middle class' blue collar worker with union protection, secure employment, and relatively decent benefits between the 1950s and the 1970s in the U.S. In order to compete, global corporations are employing new technologies of instant global communication and automation to pit U.S. workers against cheap labor abroad and against robots at home. The 'Fordist' circuit of accumulation, based on mass production for mass consumption, is giving way before a new regime of accumulation based on luxurious 'overconsumption' by privileged upper strata with subsistence or less for an underclass which, when employed, works as low-wage temps producing goods and servicing the well-to-do. The barrel-shaped income distribution, with the securely employed blue collar worker in the solid middle income brackets, is giving way to an hourglass-shaped structure of income stratification. On the one side is a shrinking strata of securely employed, highly skilled, often unionized skilled workers and technicians. On the other side is a growing mass of underemployed, poorly paid, rarely unionized, and generally marginalized workers in the services and in the 'global factory' of dispersed networks of interchangeable, highly automated, modular industrial units. These production units usually require only a limited workforce, often hired on a part-time, short-term basis, much like migrant farm workers.

In short, we are witnessing the decomposition of class structure of industrial society. Millions of people are in transition, with no stable position in the system of social stratification. Millions are becoming expendable, their labor no longer needed, with growing criminality and social unrest from below and brutality and repression from above. An increasingly repressive, militarized, state-guided capitalism is emerging to keep 'order'.

A popular struggle for grassroots democracy, not a class struggle around material interests, is the weak link of this emerging structure of militarized state capitalism. The victims of this restructuring are becoming as deaf to traditional worker-oriented class appeals of the old left as they would be to the old agrarian appeals of the nineteenth century populist movement of farmers and sharecroppers. But 'The People', the revolutionary subject of the classical democratic revolu-

tions of the eighteenth century, could return if populist alliances in post-Fordist cities can be developed between the middle strata concerned with the quality of life and the marginalized concerned with simple access to the means to life. Economically and technologically displaced persons are receptive to the material issues raised by this restructuring—economic insecurity, the scapegoating of minorities, poisoning by toxics, the 'poverty draft' of the poor for foreign wars. But the more economically secure middle strata are just as receptive to the cultural and moral sides of these same issues—meaningless work, the absence of community, the general degradation of the natural and urban environments, the mean spirit of militarism. Democracy is the programmatic link between these two populations, which combined make up the 'immense majority'.

Libertarian municipalism as a program of popular empowerment thus potentially broadens the social base of a revolutionary movement. It calls for community assemblies as the social form through which 'The People' can find their voice and power. Community assemblies provide a forum in which all the issues can be addressed and integrated into a common program that addresses alienation as well as exploitation and poverty; the desire for community as well as oppression and hierarchy based on race, gender, age, and occupation; humanly scaled ecological technologies as well as cleaning up toxics; peace and international cooperation as well as the poverty draft.

Through neighborhood assemblies, neighborhood mandation of municipal council representatives, and neighborhood power to revoke council decisions and recall their representatives, both the material concerns of the marginalized and the quality of life concerns of the middle strata could begin to be addressed. Divided, the capitalists run the cities by playing the middle and the marginalized off against each other. United, the middle and the marginalized could use municipal institutions to begin to remake their cities to meet the concerns of both groups. By linking up with other cities, municipal confederations could resist the centralized power of national states and global corporations and ultimately replace them with new forms of grassroots political and economic democracy.

What gives grassroots democracy its radical thrust is that real democracy is the last thing modern state capitalism wants. It short-cir-

cults the military, state, and corporate managers' need for centralized control and repression to maintain stability and 'order'. Quantitative economic demands can be granted for a time to demobilize and pacify those who demand them. They can be used to play each sectional interest off against the others (as witness the Republicans, from Nixon's 'Southern Strategy' to Bush's constant quota baiting). But the qualitative, structural demands around democratic self-government in order to restore environmental quality and create meaningful work and community are 'wedge issues', to borrow from the Republican's strategic lexicon, with the difference being, however, that these 'wedge issues' isolate the elites from the people, instead of driving a wedge between different popular sectors. Capitalism's dynamic of limitless growth stands directly at odds with the goal of an ecological society in balance with nature. Democratic control of economic development directly challenges capital's prerogatives and profit-oriented dynamic. The desire for meaning in work and everyday life brings the irrationality and atomization created by market society into question. These are issues better suited to broad popular struggles organized in communities than to narrow economic struggles organized on the job.

Race and the Revolutionary Subject

The persistence of racism, anti-Semitism, nationalism, fascism, religious fundamentalism, and other 'socialisms of fools' among workers is decisive evidence that capitalism is not 'progressive' in the sense of breaking down all irrational divisions of society against itself before its own rationality based on the logic of profit. Indeed, today, as advanced capitalism enjoys a legitimacy worldwide unparalleled in its history, we are witnessing an explosion of nationalism, racism, and religious fundamentalism around the world. Far from having "stripped [workers] of every trace of national character," far from teaching them to regard religion as mere "bourgeois prejudices," as Marx and Engels had it in *The Communist Manifesto*,²⁰ the development of capitalism has strengthened nationalism and religious escapism. The history of capitalism shows that workers will frequently act against what they consciously understand to be their rational economic interests in order

20. *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 21.

to participate in irrational myths like nationalism and religious fundamentalism. Ideology and psychologically rooted subconscious motivations are at least as powerful as economic interest in shaping behavior. The turn of much of the German working class to fascism in clear contradiction of their conscious understanding of their class interests provoked Wilhelm Reich's *Mass Psychology of Fascism*, a reevaluation of the Left's political approach, particularly its failure to deal with the psychological internalization of oppression, the blind obedience to, and identification with, oppressive authority.²¹ It seems clear a transformative political practice has to do more than appeal to economic interest.

The participatory nature of direct action—and particularly direct democracy in community assemblies as the highest form of direct action—can have a transformative effect on participants, enabling them to discover their powers to think and act for themselves without the sanction of faraway, mystified authority figures, be they statist, religious, or commercial media celebrities selling lifestyle images to display (including apoliticism) rather than products to use. Libertarian municipalism seeks to create this kind of participatory politics that is transformative for its participants.

But that still leaves the question of majority oppression of minorities on the basis of race. How do we uproot racism? In the U.S., the question of racism is particularly crucial given the 500 years of capitalist development in which the class system of exploitation has been based upon the systematic racial domination of people of color. Majority rule has meant white racist rule. Democracy provides no simple solution if the majority continues to dominate ethnic minorities. Moreover, technological changes today are rendering labor less needed, threatening particularly the unskilled labor of racially dominated groups but also the labor of millions of whites. With downwardly mobile whites

21. Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970; orig. 1932). This problem for the Left of irrational political behavior in contradiction of one's own interests is also explored in Wilhelm Reich, *Sex-Pol: Essays, 1929-1934* (New York: Vintage, 1972); Maurice Brinton, *The Irrational in Politics* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1974); and Bertell Ollman, *Social and Sexual Revolution: Essays on Marx and Reich* (Boston: South End Press, 1979).

looking for scapegoats, a mass fascistic movement that could threaten the very survival of people of color in the U.S. is not out of the question. Workplace organizing is less and less relevant to the particular situation of ethnic minorities rendered unemployed and expendable by technological development.

A municipalist approach, on the other hand, starting from the existing geographical segregation of people of color by white racism, can advance a program of confederations of self-governing African-American, Latino, and Native American communities. These self-governing confederations could develop a measure of mutual aid and self-reliance that could insulate them somewhat from an intransigent white racist majority. Hopefully, by demonstrating an inspiring example of confederal grassroots democracy and economic cooperation, radicalized communities of people of color could radicalize white communities by showing a better way to live and interrelate as human beings. At the least, by entering into the larger society with an independent power base, radicalized communities of color would confront white communities with a choice between continuing racism or developing a new relationship of mutual respect and equality—between continuing to ally on racist grounds with the white capitalist and statist elites that exploit and dominate them, or developing a new alliance on democratic grounds with communities of color in order to win their own freedom from exploitation and domination by the ruling elites. The basic program for uprooting racism, then, is a program of empowerment and self-government by the racially oppressed.

The movement for black political power in the 1960s was unfortunately taken over by black liberals who have simply demanded that blacks be put in positions to do what whites used to do without changing the system. But there was also a *radical* black power perspective advanced that sought black control of the black community in order to create fundamental anti-capitalist social change in America as a whole. Starting from the facts that blacks were concentrated in the cities and being displaced from the workforce by automation, James and Grace Lee Boggs (who are today active in the Detroit Greens) called in 1965 for:

... self-government of the major cities by the black majority, mobilized behind leaders and organizations of its own creation

and prepared to reorganize the structure of city government and city life from top to bottom...

The city is the base which we must organize as the factories were organized in the 1930's. We must struggle to control, to govern the cities, as workers struggled to control and govern the factories in the 1930's.

... Black Political Power would institute a crash program to utilize the most advanced technology to free people from all forms of manual labor. It would also take immediate steps to transform the concept of welfare to one of human dignity or of well-faring and well-being. The idea of people faring well off the fruits of technology and the labors of past generations without the necessity to work for a living must become as normal as the idea of organized labor has become. There should be no illusion that this can be accomplished without expropriating those now owning and controlling the economy. It could not therefore be accomplished simply on a city-wide basis, i.e., without defeating the national power structure. However, by establishing beachheads in one or more cities, black revolutionary governments would be in the most strategic position to contend with and eventually defeat this national power structure.²²

This radical black power perspective found echoes in other sectors of the radical movements of people of color over the next decade, in the demands for community control of the schools, police, and businesses in inner cities across the country and in the 'intercommunalism' of the Black Panthers and American Indian Movement which called for community control for all communities and cooperative relations between communities. These were radical municipalist and confederalist approaches whose relevance has only increased as the trends in technological unemployment, impoverishment, imprisonment, and repression have accelerated for communities of color.

22. James Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Pages From a Black Worker's Notebook* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), pp. 40, 45-46.

Power

For Marx and Engels, the schooling in scientific technology, social cooperation, and class consciousness that the factory system provided for industrial workers was to be used in an independent workers' party aiming for state power. Whether by election or insurrection, it was only a matter of time before the numerically increasing working class would come to power. But, as we have noted above, occupational hierarchies among waged working people have mitigated against coalescing around a common class program.

Where strong labor parties have been consolidated and taken state power (Sweden, France, Germany, the U.K., among others), they have streamlined and administered capitalism, not replaced it. Party elites may have been elected into office, not into real power. They have been no match for the extra-electoral powers at the disposal of the ruling elites—capital mobility, entrenched bureaucracy, corporate media, military repression. Recognizing that the parliamentary road is self-defeating and that only a majoritarian movement based on direct action to carry through the program of social reconstruction has the power to overthrow the ruling elites, worker-oriented revolutionaries have focused on direct action at the point of production, building toward the revolutionary general strike.

With the turn of the century wave of general strikes, especially the formation of workers' councils (soviets) in the 1905 Russian uprising, the mass strike became a key strategic perspective for more radical Marxists like Rosa Luxemburg and later the council communists. Even earlier, anarcho-syndicalists had put the general strike at the heart of their strategy. Not only was the capitalist system making industrial workers radical, they believed, it was also positioning them in the key positions in the economic structure to resist and eventually overthrow capitalism. As Rudolf Rocker explained:

... in Spain the widespread strike movement among the workers and peasants after the Fascist revolt in July, 1936, developed in a "social general strike" (*huelga general*) and led to armed resistance, and with this to the abolishment of the capitalist economic order and the reorganization of the economic life by the workers themselves.

The great importance of the general strike lies in this: At one blow it brings the whole economic system to a standstill and shakes it to its foundations. Moreover, such an action is in no wise dependent on the practical preparedness of all the workers, as all the citizens of a country have never participated in a political overturn. That the organized workers in the most important industries quit work is enough to cripple the entire economic mechanism, which cannot function without the daily provision of coal, electric power, and raw materials of every sort....

For the workers the general strike takes the place of the barricades of the political uprising. It is for them a logical outcome of the industrial system whose victims they are today, and at the same time it offers them their strongest weapon in their struggle for liberation...²³

Historical experience has provided us with a number of instances in which workers had the point of production in their hands, but not the social power that people like Rucker thought it would bring. The Russian factory committees and soviets of 1917 were not able to avoid being outmaneuvered by the Bolsheviks and the centralization of power in a party-state. The Spanish Revolution of 1936-37 was not able to beat back the fascists even though they had the means of production under their control in Catalonia, Aragon, and other areas. The Hungarian workers' councils of 1956 were simply crushed by Soviet armed might. Polish Solidarity was not able to overthrow the Polish government despite its incredibly vast network of workers' councils and broad popular support.

Taking over the point of production is necessary, but not sufficient. We need a strategy that deals with all the dimensions of social power. Another crucial necessary condition is to win over the rank and file of the armed forces. A list of recent revolutions shows how crucial it is: the Armed Forces Movement that overthrew the Portuguese fascists in 1974, the overthrow of Marcos in the Philippines by the 'People's Power' movement, the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979, and the

23. Rudolf Rucker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, pp. 121-23.

revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989. A sectoral workers' movement is less likely to find sympathy with rank and file soldiers than a popular movement based in communities where soldiers' families, friends, and neighborhoods are.

In any case, the industrial structure that once made the general strike appear so potentially powerful is being restructured. A traditional problem for radical labor organizing has always been the fact that the higher strata of the working class—the more skilled, better paid, and more securely employed—have been easier to organize. This problem is only exacerbated today with the new industrial structure that has emerged with capitalist restructuring over the last 20 years. Industrial unions, or federations of workers' councils organized by industry, made some sense in the old 'Fordist' industrial structure based on a locally integrated factory with a large and stable work force. But the heightened mobility of capital in the new industrial structure has weakened workers' power at the point of production. It is very easy for capital to instantly switch production to another plant halfway around the world in order to undermine militant workers.

On the other hand, relative to the national state, local government finds itself with heightened responsibility, and hence leverage, for the conditions of production that attract investment. Not only tax breaks and pollution abatements, but schools, public services, and the general quality of the local environment are increasingly the factors corporations weigh when locating new plants and offices. This gives community-based movements some leverage over the direction of economic development, and potentially more leverage when a network of community movements emerges that can counter capital's attempt to play one community off against another.²⁴

After 150 years in which worker-oriented theories have dominated the Left, it is easy to forget that most of the high points of revolutionary upheaval in the last millennium have been communal peasant movements and urban municipal movements. From the free cities and the leagues or confederations they formed for periods from the tenth century on, through the many peasant uprisings seeking communal

24. Margit Mayer, "Politics in the Post-Fordist City," *Socialist Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (January/March 1991), pp. 105-24.

autonomy from oppressive landlords, the American and French Revolutions with their town meetings and neighborhood assemblies, and even such high points of 'proletarian socialism' as the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Spanish Revolution of 1936-37, it has been multi-class, popular movements aimed at local self-government in opposition to the centralized state that have shaken the foundations of hierarchical society, both feudal and capitalist.²⁵ Indeed, in the larger historical perspective, it is the workers' movement that is the 'new social movement'—and probably a transitory one corresponding to the rise and fall of the factory system. The transclass democratic movements are the older and more abiding forms of popular struggle.²⁶ It is not the working class incubating as capitalism develops, but the municipality still surviving despite the massive growth of the state that is the potential time bomb that could explode and shake state capitalism beyond recuperation.

With its potential for direct democracy and confederal forms of coordination that stand in stark opposition to statist forms, the municipality and municipal confederations create a local framework through which millions of people can act directly to replace market society and the bureaucratic state with free, egalitarian, and cooperative social forms. By broadening the social forces that can be mobilized, a libertarian municipalist approach can sustain and institutionalize much more popular power against the state and capital than can a workers' control approach limited to the workplace.

25. On the history of municipalist movements in opposition to capitalism and the national state, see Murray Bookchin, *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1987); and Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

26. On the hidden history of transclass social movements, see André Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes, "Ten Theses on Social Movements," *IFDA Dossier 63* (January 1987) and "Civil Democracy: Social Movements in Recent World History," in Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, André Gunder Frank, and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Transforming the Revolution: Social Movements and the World-System* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990).

Transitional Strategy

A transitional strategy seeks to raise demands and develop forms of action and organization which progressively build the conditions in which popular revolutionary action becomes possible.

First, it should raise demands that mobilize people around their immediate concerns, but in such a way that in the course of struggling for them, people are educated as to the nature of the system and the need for fundamental change. The demands and the struggle for them should serve as a bridge between present consciousness and revolutionary consciousness.

Second, the demands, if won, should not improve capitalism, but impinge upon its logic by creating new centers of democratic counter-power which prefigure the society we want to create. As the *Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World* put it, we need forms of organization and action which begin to create "the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."

Third, the demands and forms of action and organization should aim at shaking the system, provoking a crisis, and opening the door to fundamental social transformation.

Anarcho-syndicalism and council communism viewed the struggle between wage labor and capital at the point of production as meeting these requirements for a transitional strategy. Rudolf Rocker:

By direct action the Anarcho-Syndicalists mean every method of immediate warfare by the workers against their economic and political oppressors...

In its simplest form it is for the workers an indispensable means of raising their standard of living or defending their attained advantages against the concerted measures of the employers. But the strike is for the workers not only a means for the defense of immediate economic interests, it is also a continuous schooling for their powers of resistance, showing them every day that every last right has to be won by unceasing struggle against the existing system.

Just as are the economic fighting organizations of the workers, so also are the daily wage-struggles a result of the capitalist economic order, and consequently, a vital necessity for the workers. Without these they would be submerged in the abyss of poverty. Certainly the social problem cannot be solved by wage-struggles alone, but they are the best educative instrument for making the workers acquainted with the real essence of the social problem, training them for the struggle for liberation from economic and social slavery....

Here we come to the general cultural significance of the labor struggle. The economic alliance of the producers not only affords them a weapon for the enforcement of better living conditions, it becomes for them a practical school, a university of experience, from which they draw instruction and enlightenment in richest measure. The practical experiences and occurrences of the everyday struggles of the workers find an intellectual precipitate in their organizations, deepen their understanding, and broaden their intellectual outlook.²⁷

From what has been said so far, it should be clear that strategies focused on struggles at the point of production have isolated workers from the rest of the community. Hierarchy in the workplace has been much like the military, an experience of socialization into obedience, not a school for rebellion. Contrary to the expectations of Rocker and other worker-oriented radicals, the labor movement has not been a self-developing struggle, building upon itself in an escalating series of demands, winning more workers' counterpower that serves as a platform for still further demands until the workers can take on the system itself. Instead, labor has become a competing interest group in capitalist society, bargaining for a better position within the system, not fighting for an alternative to it.

Recognizing these facts is not to say that workplace struggles should be ignored or disregarded. Workplace hierarchy, wages, benefits, hours, health and safety—all are important issues. But they need to be linked organically to community struggles. Workplace groups should

27. Rudolph Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, pp. 116-17.

be part of broader community organizations that take workplace issues out of their particularistic context and generalize them. In this context, workplace struggles can develop way beyond a narrow struggle for labor to get its 'fair share' within capitalism and raise basic questions about the system: Why work when contemporary technology is so productive? Do we need bosses, or can we do it ourselves democratically? How can we restructure tasks and choose technology so that working develops us as creative and responsible human beings, rather than uses us as cogs in the megamachine? How can we produce more of what we want locally for local use?

So rather than an economic struggle separated organizationally from a political struggle, the economic struggle should be an arm of a community-based struggle for participatory democracy. The community-based struggle would bring the different social sectors and struggles together around their common interests and seek to institutionalize the continual process of discovering the common good by creating community assemblies of all citizens and confederal forms of coordination that link the base assemblies through mandated and recallable delegates to municipal, regional, and higher level councils.

With the new industrial structure we face today, a convergence of community and labor organizing makes more sense, with the community rather than an industry being the basic unit of labor organizing. Community-based unions make more sense when most of the workforce is moving from job to job in small workplaces around the community. The old Wobbly idea of One Big Union where workers transferring from one job to another were automatically enrolled in the IWW branch at the new workplace should be revived, but adapted so that the communities, rather than industries, are the units of confederation.²⁸ Community-based unions as components of broader community movement organizations create the right kind of network for raising 'transitional demands' relating to work—open the books and other enterprise information, 'green bans' where workers refuse to work on environmentally destructive projects as has been done by Australian construction workers, health and safety demands on the job linked to

28. Jeremy Brecher, "Crisis Economy: Born-Again Labor Movement?" *Monthly Review*, Vol. 35, No. 10 (March 1984).

anti-toxics demands in the community, workplace democracy, rotation among workplaces and types of work, and so forth. They provide a natural community-based context for solidarizing and harmonizing workers' particular interests with the broader community concerns and struggles.

As community struggles grow, as a combination of direct action and local electoral campaigns leads to a restructuring of municipal government around community assemblies, it becomes possible to begin developing a municipalized economic sector through public financing and eminent domain that can prefigure the cooperative commonwealth and begin to act as a countervailing power to the corporate and state sectors.

Building the struggle this way creates an immediate context in which everyday people from all walks of life—not only party elites, not only workers—can act directly to democratize the economy and society generally. As liberated areas under community control link up confederally and begin to develop a parallel power structure that can challenge the supremacy of the state and capital, this grassroots counterpower would face efforts by the national state and global corporations to crush the new powers exercised by the grassroots democracy.

At this crisis point, tax strikes against the state, expropriation without compensation, and an overall appeal to the people to withdraw every form of support from the old centralized structures and throw it to the new grassroots-democratic structures would be the order of the day. Much would depend on whether the rank and file of the armed forces sided with the people or their chain of command, a condition which a community-oriented strategy can address much better than a worker-oriented strategy. But there would also be a role for workers' councils forming in the workplaces at this crisis point. They would be indispensable for expropriating corporate and state property and bringing it under the administration of the grassroots democracy.²⁹ Despite their declining relative numbers, there are still today in the U.S. some 30 million industrial workers (19 million in manufacturing, six million in

29. For discussions of this kind of scenario in modern industrial countries, see Murray Bookchin, "The Forms of Freedom" and "The May-June Events in France - 2" in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*.

construction and mining, five million in transport, communication, and utilities), down only slightly in absolute numbers from the 1979 peak. This is roughly 25-30 percent of the workforce and 10-15 percent of the population. Workers' control is thus not irrelevant, but neither is it the leading edge of a revolutionary strategy. Rather, it is an aspect of the broader strategy of community control, an aspect that grows out of the community struggle and is not likely to emerge until the community movement is well developed.

To build to that point—to progressively create the conditions in which popular revolutionary action can finally overthrow state capitalism—the core of the mounting struggle has to be oriented toward the community, toward building the new political counterinstitutions based on community assemblies and confederal networks among them that can eventually appropriate the economy and establish the cooperative commonwealth.